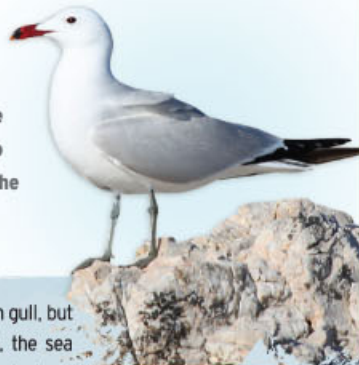


Inshore and pelagic seabirds

The **Audouin's Gull** (*Larus audouinii*) differs from other gulls by the fact that it is closely related to the sea rather than land. It flies slowly, above waves and catches small-sized fish on the sea surface. In Greece, approximately 500 pairs of Audouin's Gull nest on uninhabited islets, far from human presence. Intense fishing in coastal waters may severely affect its food sources, but unlike the Shag it feeds to some extent on fisheries by-catch. Human disturbance in its breeding colonies is another serious threat. A single careless visit from people or domestic animals may be enough for the Audouin's Gulls to abandon their nests and their colony. The combination of all these facts makes the Audouin's Gull, flag species of the insular area, the most threatened seabird species in Greece.

Some species of seabirds live exclusively in open sea, where they fish, rest and sleep. Apart from nesting they do not need land at all. They have the ability to cover great distances to find large shoals of pelagic fish in the open sea.



The **Cory's Shearwater** resembles a brown gull, but it is in fact closely related to albatrosses, the sea wanderers of the oceans in the southern hemisphere. It flies very close to the sea surface, maneuvering among waves and rarely needs to sit on the water. It comes to land only during the dark, in spring and summer nights, when it nests in deep and inaccessible crevices on uninhabited islets. An estimated 5,000 pairs nest on Greek islands.



The **Yelkouan Shearwater** resembles a small, black Cory's Shearwater, to which it is closely related. They both have similar habits, except that Yelkouan Shearwaters fly in larger flocks, usually in single lines, close above the waves. Greek uninhabited islets host 4,000-7,000 pairs of Yelkouan Shearwater.



The size of a swallow, the **European Storm-Petrel** is one of the smallest seabirds in the world. It is a pelagic species that due to its small size and small population in Greece, its habits and colonies in Greece remain a mystery.



The Hellenic Ornithological Society

The Hellenic Ornithological Society is a non governmental conservation organisation focusing on the study and protection of wild birds and their habitats, as integral elements of Greek Nature. Since 1982 we strive to safeguard a sustainable environment where birds and people may live in harmony. We study and protect wild birds, work towards the conservation of Important Bird Areas in Greece, raise public awareness, enhance environmental education, as well as advocate and intervene in environmental policy. The Hellenic Ornithological Society is a partner of Birdlife International, the largest global partnership for the conservation of wild birds and their habitats.



The LIFE project

During the last 15 years, the Hellenic Ornithological Society has been present and active in the Greek archipelagos acquiring considerable experience and knowledge, which greatly enhance the implementation of the current LIFE-Nature project «Concrete Conservation Actions for the Mediterranean Shag and Audouin' gull in Greece, including the inventory of relevant marine IBAs» (LIFE07 NAT/GR/000285). The project, which started in 2009 and will finish in 2012, is being implemented in 17 Special Protection Areas and their wider marine area, in cooperation with the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal (MOM), the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), the Technological Educational Institution (TEI) of Ionian Islands and the Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA), with the financial support of the European Commission and the co-financing of the A.G. Leventis Foundation.



Hellenic Ornithological Society

Athens: Vas. Irakleiou 24, 10682, Athens. Tel./Fax: +30210 8228704, +30210 8227937
Thessaloniki: Kastritsiou 8, 54623, Thessaloniki. Tel./Fax: +302310 244245

www.ornithologiki.gr



Editor: Roula Trigou | Text: Roula Trigou & Vassilis Hatzivassanis | Layout: Sandipo Olga Vlachou
Photos: J. Fric, B. Lascelles, C. Viada, P. Dendrinos, Th. Kastritis, G. Katsodorakis, G. Roussopoulos, A. Sakoulis, R. Trigou, A. Christidis

© Society

Seabirds of the Greek Seas



Coastal seabirds

Many species of seabirds live close to the coasts, where they can find both resting places and shallow waters rich in fish.

The **Mediterranean Shag** (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*) prefers rocky coasts, rarely moving far from them. It feeds on small-sized fish, catching them close to the sea bed with deep dives, propelled by its strong feet. Once it satisfies its hunger it rests with wings half-open on coastal rocks. It does not migrate and it breeds early, starting as early as December, on steep rocky cliffs, islets, as well as large caves and crevices. It is common to islands throughout Greece. Its national breeding population of 1,000-1,200 pairs is concentrated mostly in the central and northern Aegean Sea, where the largest colonies are located.

Marine pollution as well as overfishing in coastal waters reduce its food sources, because unlike other seabird species, it does not follow fishing boats to feed on their by-catch. Some get caught in fishing nets while diving. Since it prefers to swim around rather than fly it is more vulnerable to oil spills. Its nests on islets are easily accessible, but fortunately unwanted island visitors are rare during its breeding season.

Apart from the Mediterranean Shag, different species of gulls use the coastal areas to rest, search for food and nest.



Unique archipelagos

An archipelago, with its dispersed islands and islets is an ideal place for seabirds, where they can find food at sea and safety for their young on uninhabited islets.

A combination of shallow and deep waters with numerous flat and steep islands and islets makes the Aegean and Ionian archipelagos unique. Audouin's Gulls, Mediterranean Shags and thousands of other seabirds, as well as 8 out of 10 Eleonora's Falcons in the world nest here. Many of the islands and islets are already part of the NATURA 2000 network, which assembles the most important European areas for the biodiversity conservation.

Unfortunately, several human activities threaten the archipelago. On the islets, rats which have been unintentionally introduced prey on eggs and those nestlings that still can't fly. Intensive fishing in coastal waters reduces fish stocks, which seabirds rely on to feed their young. Oil spills, plastic waste and abandoned fishing nets are lethal for both fish and seabirds, as many of the latter get tangled in fishing nets and longlines, finally drowning.



Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonorae*)



At sea like on land, the **NATURA 2000** network constitutes the most important and effective tool for the conservation of seabirds and the marine areas which are important to them.



How does the LIFE project help seabirds and the archipelago?

Implements studies on the populations, distribution, breeding ecology and behaviour of Audouin's Gull and Mediterranean Shag at their colonies and at sea.

Identifies the most important marine areas for seabirds, in order to provide the scientific basis for their effective conservation through the NATURA 2000 network.

Works with fishermen, to find suitable adapted fishing methods, to reduce accidental catch of seabirds in fishing gear, as well as to reduce the damage and losses that seabirds cause to fisheries.

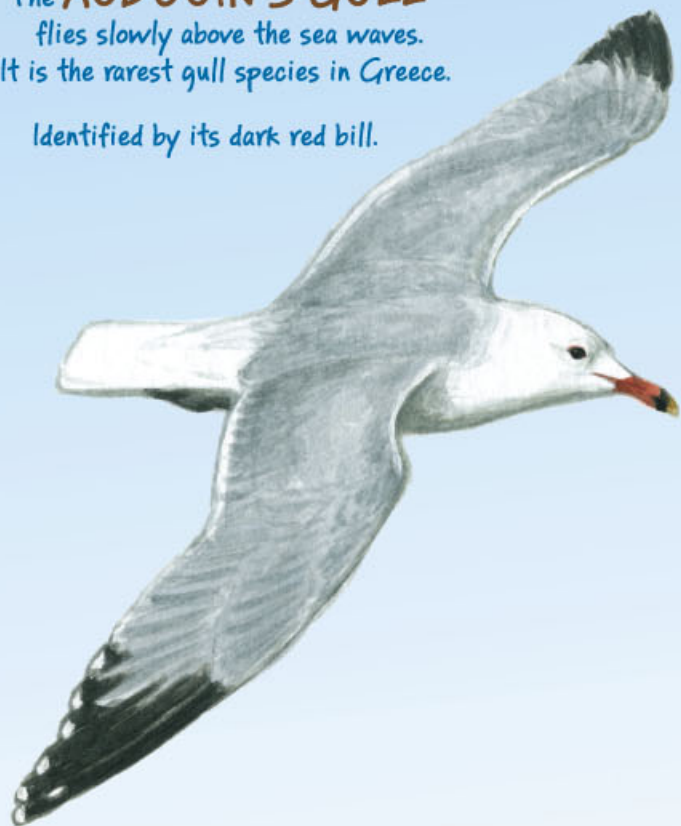
Controls the populations of invasive and competitive species in the most important seabird colonies, in order to improve the survival of their eggs and chicks.

Informs the general public on the importance of birds, islets and the marine area, as well as how each one can contribute to their protection.



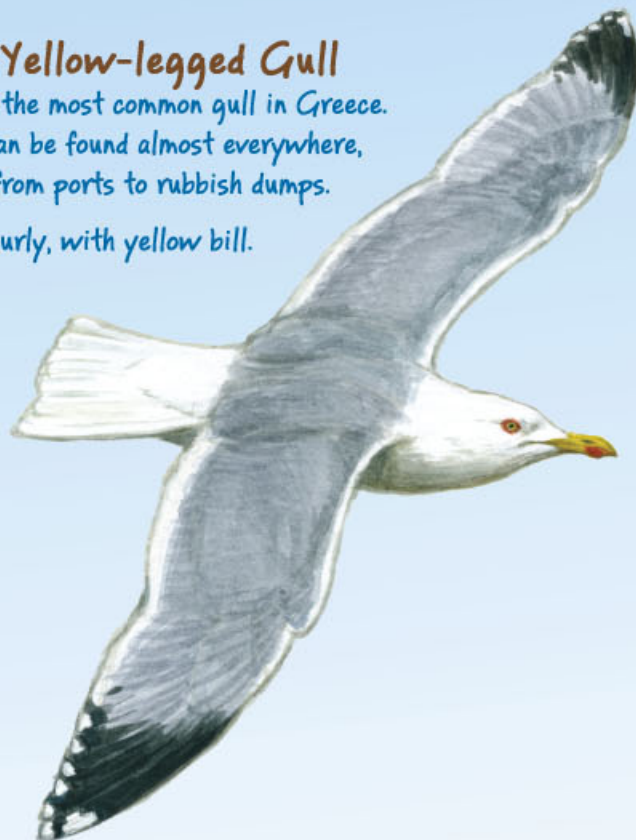
The **AUDOUIN'S GULL**
flies slowly above the sea waves.
It is the rarest gull species in Greece.

Identified by its dark red bill.



The **Yellow-legged Gull**
is the most common gull in Greece.
It can be found almost everywhere,
from ports to rubbish dumps.

Burly, with yellow bill.



Juvenile gulls have
distinctive brown spots.



A **Cory's Shearwater**
maneuvering among waves
resembles a brown gull.

It is brown above and white below.



The **European Storm-Petrel**
has the size of a swallow.

It has a characteristic rump
just above the tail.



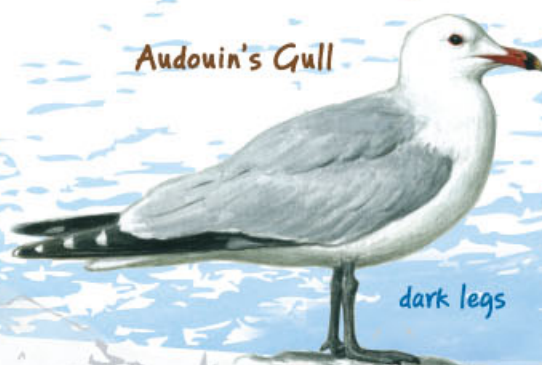
The **Yelkouan Shearwater**
resembles a smaller, black gull.

Flies fast, usually in flocks,
almost touching the waves.



slender bill, long neck

Audouin's Gull



dark legs

Yellow-legged Gull



yellow legs

The **MEDITERRANEAN SHAG**
sits on rocks of the coast.

It is pitch-black and when
in flight, with long,
straight and thin neck.



The **Cormorant** is a frequent visitor
to wetlands and ports during winter.

It has white spots and when in flight,
a long neck, which is thick and "kinked".



Young Yellow-legged Gull



The **Black-headed Gull**
is a small-sized gull that winters
in wetlands and ports.

It has a characteristic brown head
during summer and white head
with dark spots during winter.

